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Rep. Dent honors late philanthropist and businessman Sarkis Acopian

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent (PA-15) today read the following remarks on the floor of the House and into the Congressional record to honor the late Sarkis Acopian, a Lehigh Valley businessman and philanthropist who passed away Jan. 18:

“Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the life of a national treasure, Sarkis Acopian. Mr. Acopian died January 18, 2007 at his home in Palmer Township, Pennsylvania, which is located in my Congressional District. He was 80 years old.

“To say that Mr. Acopian lived a full life does not do justice to the legacy of this extraordinary man. His is, in part, the classic immigrant success story. He was born on December 8, 1926, in Tabriz, Iran, to Armenian parents. He came to this country in 1945 to study engineering at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania. While here, Mr. Acopian was drafted into the United States Army. After completing his military service, Mr. Acopian returned to Lafayette, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering in 1951.

“Mr. Acopian used his prodigious intellectual gifts and business acumen to design and build things that helped to make peoples’ lives better. While working for the Weller Electric Corporation, he designed a power sander which became one of the company’s main products. After forming the Acopian Technical Company in 1957, he designed and manufactured the

first-ever solar radio. Mr. Acopian subsequently led his company into the power supply business, and the company, which is still operating today, became quite successful in that enterprise.

“But Sarkis Acopian was much, much more than just an outstanding entrepreneur. In that regard, he loved outdoor adventure, and throughout his life he was an avid pilot, scuba diver, and skydiving enthusiast who made more than 200 jumps during the 1960s. But where he really made his presence known was in his philanthropic work.

“Mr. Acopian was a self-effacing man who believed passionately in supporting the community quietly but with unmatched generosity.

“He was passionate about education. He made significant donations to Columbia University, to the Acopian Engineering Center at Lafayette College, and to the Acopian Center for Ornithology at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

“He was passionate about his faith, building the St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, and giving generously to the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America and the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, as well as to local churches in Armenia.

“He was passionate about nature, creating the Acopian Center for Conservation Learning at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and the Acopian Bog Turtle Preserve, as well as endowing the environmental education program at the American University of Armenia and the Florida Institute of Technology.

“He was passionate about the locality in which he lived: Easton, Pennsylvania. He gave generously to the Children’s Home of Easton, a sanctuary for underprivileged youth; the State Theater of Easton; and the Easton National Canal Museum. His contributions made children’s lives better, raised appreciation for the arts in his community, and helped to preserve important local history.

“As an immigrant to this country, Mr. Acopian was eternally grateful for the opportunities that had been afforded him here. He showed that gratitude in part by providing \$1 million toward the construction of the

World War II memorial in Washington, DC. His generous donation was the largest single contribution in that fund raising effort.

“Mr. Acopian’s greatest passion, however, was for his lovely wife of 59 years, Mrs. Bobbye Seitze Mixon Acopian. Together the couple had two sons, Gregory (married to Karen) and Jeffrey (married to Helen), both of whom still reside in Easton. He is survived also by six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

“Mr. Speaker, I ask that a copy of this speech be inserted in the Congressional Record so that Mr. Sarkis Acopian’s remarkable life can be commemorated forever within the halls of Congress. It is the least we can do for such a wonderful humanitarian.”

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